FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
20-130	ORLEANS		EAS.4

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
South Eastham

Address: 315 State Highway

Historic Name: John & Hannah Walker House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: 1831-40

Source: deeds, censuses, vital records

Style/Form: Greek Revival/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Barn, 19th c.

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
House moved, mid-19th c. (reputed)
Wings added north, south & west, mid-19th c.

Condition: good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** mid 19th c. (reputed)

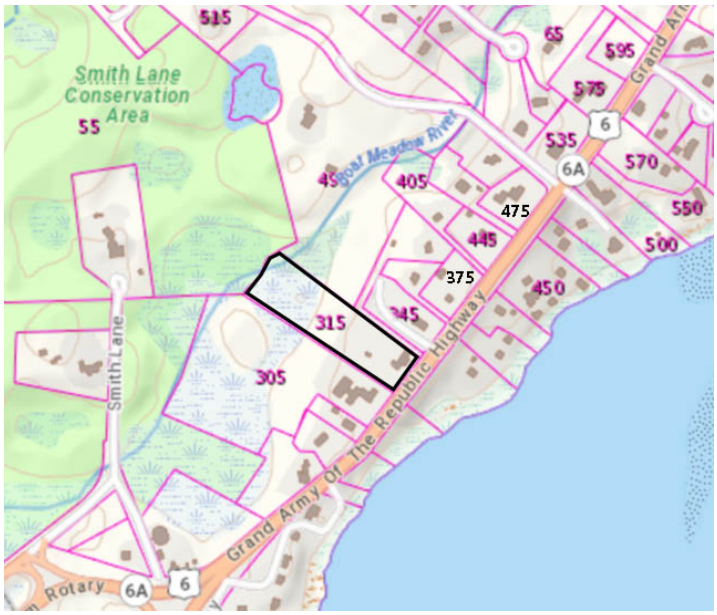
Acreage: 2.368

Setting: The house and associated buildings are situated on the State Highway amid dense roadside development comprised of historic properties and more recent summer cottages. It overlooks Town Cove across the highway.

Photograph

View from south.

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The John & Hannah Walker House, with a center section apparently built by 1837, is a story-and-a-half wood frame single dwelling of the Cape Cod type enlarged with story-and-a-half cross-gable wings added north and south. Local historian Howard Quinn has determined that the house was moved to its present location from a site in the swamp farther west. A gable end of the core house fronts the street with four windows on the first floor separated in pairs indicating two rooms within. The roof ridge does not seem long enough for the house to have been a full Cape, and there is no chimney visible to indicate the plan. A long cross-gable wing abuts the south side of the house set back from the front gable sufficient to provide space for an entrance into the side wall of the ore house. The wing has two window positioned close to the junction of the two sections leaving most of the elevation featureless. It also has a short ell with a chimney appended to the rear. A shorter wing is set back from the north wall of the core house. An entrance and two windows fill its street façade; a brick chimney is located in the gable end; the rear slope of the roof extends to create a saltbox plan. The corners and roof edges of the core house and the wings have restrained Greek Revival trim: wide corner boards and pronounced friezes. Doors contain arched windows, and all the visible sash are two-over-two units suggesting that significant renovations occurred in the late 1800s. The rambling, haphazard plan suggests that additions were made to create multiple units for seasonal rentals.

The house is sited at the narrow frontage of a deep lot set back from the highway behind a small yard with mature trees. A driveway enters the north end of the parcel and runs past the house to a 19th-century saltbox barn behind the house. The rear of the parcel is composed of meadow and marsh.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house now numbered 315 State Highway is located on land mariner John Walker bought from Jabez Sparrow Jr. in February 1837.[1] Six years earlier, Walker, son of Peter Walker (1764-by April 1837) and Abigail Brown of Eastham, married Hannah Linnell (1805-78) of Orleans. Eastham historian Howard Quinn asserted, on unsubstantiated authority, that the 315 State Highway house was moved from swamp land to the west and later expanded. It may have been moved by the time of Walker's marriage, and by 1840 Walker was clearly living in this neighborhood with five persons in his household.

The 1850 census describes John Walker as a farmer with $270 in real property and living with his wife and four children—Sarah H., John F., Absalom L., and Mary E.—born between 1834 and 1844. The 1858 Eastham map attaches his name to the house. By 1860 the value of his real estate had grown to $1000, and only son Absalom, a mariner, and daughter Mary remained in the household. The federal agricultural schedule listed him with ten acres of land, a horse, a milking cow, three other cattle, and one pig. Walker served the town as a highway surveyor and fence viewer in the 1860s and 1870s. Hannah Linnell Walker died in 1878, and in 1880 John Walker lived in the house with his daughter Mary E., then thirty-five years old.

John Walker died in November 1884, and in his will, he left to his daughter Mary "my Homestead land lying between the new county road and the old county road so called together with all the buildings standing thereon except one half of the barn, and a lot of woodland bought of Timothy Smith, [and] all personal property except the fish weir, and the lot called the Shore field." Less than two weeks after her father's death, Mary Walker married the widowed farmer James Smith (1832-87), who lived just west of the 315 State Highway house. Six years after Smith's death, in 1893, she married Somerville clerk Charles Addison Flagg (1854-1909) and moved to that town, but she retained ownership of her childhood home. Eastham tax records for 1902 list her a nonresident with a house valued at $600, a barn at $150, and outbuilding at $15, and nine acres, seven of them described as "village land."

In 1909, five months after the death of husband Charles Flagg, Mary E. Flagg sold the estate her father left to her—1.5 acres on the west side of County Road with the 315 State Highway house and outbuildings, and four acres on the other side of the road—to her nephew Abbott H. Walker (1864-1954).[2] The son of John Walker's son John F. Walker (1840-1922) and his wife Mary

[1] Jabez Sparrow Jr. to John Walker, 20 February 1837, BCD 35:429.
[2] Mary E. Flagg, Somerville, to Abbott H. Walker, 31 August 1909, BCD 296:283. See *Yarmouth Register,* 25 September 1909, 8: "Capt. Abbott H Walker has purchased the house belonging to Mrs Mary Flagg of Somerville."

Eldredge (1841-1916), Abbott Walker married Lilla A. Wiley of Wellfleet in 1887, and in 1900 he was renting in this South Eastham neighborhood with his wife and their first four children—Stanley Marston, Sadie M., Olive K., and Lawrence A. The 1910 census lists Abbott Walker as the keeper of the Life Saving Station (at Nauset). By then son Stanley was working in the shell fishery, and the couple's youngest child, Howard Fenelon, was four years old. The six members of the family of Ada F. Lincoln Gross, who had grown up just north of this house, were renting in the household. In 1920 only Abbott and Lillie Walker and their son Howard were living at 315 State Highway with his wife's widowed father James Wiley. In 1926 the town taxed Walker on a house valued at $1840, a cow, an eight-acre homestead lot with a barn, shed, poultry house, and outbuilding, and woodland and upland parcels. By 1931 Walker had built a cottage (valued at $800) and a garage ($100) on the property. In 1935 the *Yarmouth Register* reported at length on Walker's automobile accident:

> Survivor of a score of hair breadth escapes in 35 years as a lifesaver and Coast Guardsman, Capt. Abbott H. Walker of Eastham never came closer to death in the sea than he did at the Bridge street crossing of the New Haven railroad in Orleans, Saturday afternoon. His coupe, struck by the Hyannis-Provincetown train and tossed 30 feet through the air, his body thrown 20 feet to within 18 inches of the spinning drive wheels of the passenger engine, the retired Coast Guard skipper was ticketed to emerge from Cape Cod hospital Sunday as sound as the day in January, 1925, when he and six members of his crew from the Nauset station in Eastham escaped with their lives after their surf boat capsized twice in a desperate effort to rescue members of the crew of the U.S. Submarine S-19, grounded in the northeaster on the bars off Nauset Inlet. Rushed to the hospital after the accident, Captain Walker, 71 at his last birthday, was found to be suffering only from superficial injuries.[3]

By 1940 Abbott Walker and his son Stanley had begun taking groups out in small fishing boats, and by 1940 Abbott was listed as a "captain" of fishing parties in the census. In 1947 the town taxed him on the 315 State Highway house ($2500), its barn and had, a hen house, brooder house, outbuilding, cottage, and garage and a total of about twenty-four acres in several parcels. The house was assessed at $3000 in 1954, the year Abbott Walker died at the age of ninety.

In October 1955 Abbott Walker's children Sarah, Olive, and Stanley sold their interest in their father's real estate to their youngest brother Howard F. Walker, who owned it for the next sixteen years.[4] In 1929 Howard Walker had married Natalie Yvonne Doane of South Orleans, and he owned a house near his childhood home on State Highway by 1930. He was a shell fisherman in 1930 and a realtor by 1934. He was a shell fisherman again in 1940 and by 1942 was working for neighbor Bernard C. Collins. He owned 315 State Highway until 1971, when he subdivided it and sold the 315 State Highway house and 2.372 acres to Richard John and Susan Comeau, who in 1984 also acquired 305 State Highway (EAS.3). Richard Comeau died in 2016, and Susan Comeau was the owner of record in 2020.[5]

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[3] "Escapes Near Tragedy," *Yarmouth Register*, 21 September 1935, 1.
[4] Sarah W. Taylor and Olive K. Gorham, Orleans, and Stanley M. Walker to Howard F. Walker, 5 October 1955, BCD 923:31.
[5] Howard F. Walker to Richard J. and Susan Comeau, 4 February 1971, BCD 1499:1022; Commonwealth of Massachusetts Land Court in re: petition 36543 of Howard F. Walker, 27 March 1980, Certificate of Title 81317. The 315 State Highway Road house and its outbuildings are depicted on 2.372 acres on "Plan of Land in Eastham (South) Mass. as Surveyed for and to be Conveyed by Howard F. Walker," January 1971, BCP 243:149.

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MAPS

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PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from SE.

View from NE.

View of barn from SE.